2: Morris T-5 (1937)1938 AK5 Lepcha AK5

eighty people, including men, women and children, would be present. They would spend the day feasting and drinking, and on some occasions would continue the party well into the following day. There would generally be some visitors from nearby villages and, in consequence, much exchange of gossip. These fortnightly meetings served the purpose of a newspaper and helped to keep the people in touch. They were almost the only break in a life of otherwise unceasing toil.

There are no shops in Lingtem, no doctor, and no school. The people are mainly self-supporting and grow all their own food. Such things as cotton, oil and salt are obtained from Mangen which, in addition to a few Marwari shop-keepers, has also a post office to which mails are delivered twice a week. This, however, is not much used, since the Lepchas are for the most part still illiterate. This means that in order not to forget a thing they do not find it necessary to commit it to writing. As a result, they have, like most primitive peoples, quite remarkable memories.

For the first few days we were left completely alone; not a soul ventured near us. Early each morning Dhawa and I would set off in our quest for people, but everywhere we went there was nothing but empty houses, each with its guardian dog. I began to get worried, for it certainly looked as though the Maharaja was right, although actually (but I only learned this later) the people were merely away working in their fields. And then one morning Geoffrey discovered an ancient alone in a house. He was toothless, decrepit, and ill, but willing to risk a visit. We decoyed him up to the monastery, gave him some medicine and plied him with cigarettes. As an informant he was useless; but his visit served to break the ice. Others followed, and the village soon realised that we really were harmless. Thereafter we were able to arrange for a regular stream of informants and someone or other usually came each morning to talk. In this manner we soon came to know most of the village by sight, and after the first few weeks were able to

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also used for cooking rice. It is sometimes the custom to pickle corpses when, for instance, it is desired to postpone burial until some auspicious day. Large copper vessels, as big as a barrel, are used for this purpose; in Lingtem there were only two. These belonged to the Mandal, who kindly lent us one to store our water! It was near to the time of departure, however, before I realised their proper function. The Mandal assured us that, in point of fact, no corpse had ever been stored in our particular pot; but I feel sure that he thought we were being unduly squeamish. Perhaps we were.

Both rooms of a house are normally used for sleeping, but there is some sort of idea that if the inner room contains an altar (which is not always the case) it should be slept in only by Lamas: this rule, however, like many others, seems to be disregarded. Only the outer clothing is removed at night, and the people sleep on the floor. There is little attempt at privacy; nor indeed would this be possible where as many as fifteen people, as was the case in Tafoor's house for instance, have to be accommodated in two small rooms. This is perhaps an extreme instance; but it is unusual, except in the case of an elderly childless couple, to find less than four or five people occupying one room.

Men wear a pair of loosely-cut cotton shorts and a cotton shirt of Tibetan pattern. The shorts are made unnecessarily large in the waist, the surplus being folded over and tucked in in order to keep them up. Both these articles are made from machine-made material, and are usually obtained (at exorbitant prices) from Hindu shopkeepers in Mangen. On top of them they generally wear the Lepcha *dum-dyum*, an attractive home-spun garment woven from imported white cotton with a typical striped design in red, blue, and yellow. This is no longer much made in Lingtem, and is usually obtained from some other Lepcha village. The Lingtem people seem to think they are better employed in tending their crops, and that it is really cheaper to buy their cloth rather than have the women make it at home. It seems a pity. The *dum-dyum* is not a made-up garment